



MILWAUKEE'S

Holiday Folk Fair

The Milwaukee Liths In Front
Of Their Booth

The Annual Folk Fair, which the International Institute of Milwaukee sponsors yearly was held this year during December 3-4. It probably had its largest crowd; twenty-four thousand people were present to watch the display of handicraft in specially erected booths, to taste the various flavored foreign foods and to enjoy the dances which were presented and prepared by twenty-four Milwaukee ethnic groups. The Sunday crowd was much too immense for comfort but the spirits were high and the holiday mood prevailed.

The first program was presented Saturday afternoon at 2:00 P. M. Children from German language schools sang and did party game dances. They were followed by Czech children and adults, former doing a harvest dance, and the latter, a composed number to "The Bartered Bride." Their presentation was poor. One would never guess that the Czechs are responsible for the origination of the polka. The majority, particularly among the men, didn't know how to polka or how to keep time. The Mexicans didn't do too bad. Their La Bamba was interesting, Jarabe Tapatio was done well enough. Two girls danced the Zandunga. The followed two groups of tumblers also seemed to have tumbled out from the wrong side of the bed. A grand march closed the first program which should have scared people away from any further attendances. But bad beginnings seem to be followed up with happy endings and "all is well when it ends well."

The evening program was a considerable improvement. The Bavarian Dancers — and there must have been a hundred of them — were undeniably excellent and placed the audience in a happy mood. It was fun to watch them. The Czechs followed them with all their previous mistakes and awkwardness. Then about 60 Italians came on. Their costumes were a makeshift type and their presentation was a hodge-podge, for the most part doing Quadriglia steps to Tarantella music with a free-for-all ragtime thrown into the bargain. The reeling down the center done by each of the 30 or more couples, over and over, was much too monotonous since it lasted

almost ten minutes!

Some six Swedish couples presented four dances, among them being the Fjalnaspolska and the Oxdansen. All well done and well received, particularly the Oxdansen performed by four boys. They were followed by a hundred or so Hungarians of all sizes and ages. The men were not costumed. They did four couple dances, one to the popular Polish tune "Na Zielony Lase" and another to Glory Haleluja. Their redeeming dance was the last one, a mixer, when during the progression big people had to dance with small, six year oldsters. One cute, tiny Magyar lad, twirled off each girl to the next person with so much "important" vigor, pride and self-satisfaction that each send off required a wiping to his face or nose while his face beamed victoriously as he completed the feat with a "bokazo" step. He was cute and winning.

The Greeks made a picturesque picture in their "kilts" and native garb. A. Tsamiko done by the boys only was particularly good, as was their Syrtos and Pentozali. A German choir of good voices, and well trained Swiss Turner group completed the program which, as always wound up with a grand march.

The Poles appeared with a very ambitious St. John's Eve pageant opening both Sunday performances. No songs were sung but the musicians played the appropriate (and some inappropriate) melodies connected with the celebration as a group of a hundred or more enacted in pantomime all the customs related to one of Poland's gay festivals. The only dancing consisted of a Polonaise which seemed to be the motif of the evening and a few other simple movements. The story itself began in the hoary past when St. John's day was still a pagan holiday centered around a pagan deity. A girl of that period who merited the winning of an enchanted flower and entitled for the fulfillment of one wish desired to see that festival would be celebrated in Poland 1,000 years later. A solemn religious procession was what she saw. On a whole it was a charming and a colorful scene.

The Mexicans repeated their program but replaced

the Sandunga with a Spanish Jota (La Madre Del Cordero — which is really considered Mexican). During the second half of the dance they did it with hands joined, much too much in continental style rather than in the Spanish. The Russians presented Korobotchka (Russian), Krizachok (Byelorussian) and Kazachok (Ukrainian). The Korobotchka suffered the American Malady and it did one better than done in California and New York, they clapped twice! Because, according to the leader, it livens the dance. If the dance is "dead" then why use it? There are plenty live dances among the Russians and leave the statelity ones alone. This dance correctly done would have been a wonderful contrast to the other two dances which were well performed.

The Lithuanian group appeared with Malunelis, Lenciugelis and Kubilas. The numbers short, snappy and gay were very well received by the people. The Bavarian mountaineers presented again their hilarious number. The Croatians in their rich embroidery and intricate foot work presented Zaplet, Seljanica, Igraj Kolo and a couple dance to waltz time. It is always a delight to watch a good Kolo group dance. A Czech chorus, more turners and the grand march closed up another program.

The evening program was practically the same, except that the Russians and Lithuanians were replaced by the Slovenians and Italians. The Slovene costume and dances is closely akin to the type seen in the Tyrol; the dance, Potrkan Ples, was gay and very delightful.

Before each evening's performance there were two hours of Square Dancing to the calling of Doc Newland. Square dancers from many parts of Wisconsin came in, some dipping and diving and swinging their partners.

On the whole, it was a most interesting event and the Sunday was very gala. The selection of food, especially pastries, was amazing. The fair certainly involved a terrible amount of toil, but it was worth the while.

VFB

AS FOR MYSELF

HASSIDIC SUCCESS. XMASTIDE. FAIRHOPE, ALA.

The two months before Christmas were "mad" ones. Programs galore and never a day home. People and friends, no doubt, gave up hope of ever reaching me by phone, and I vowed (with fingers crossed) that after the French program I'd quit. But the Chicago Zionist Organization was putting on a huge spectacle at the Chicago Civic Opera House and they needed a Hassidic scene. Since the Hassidic dance is a dying art, while the dance itself is very specialized, it turned out that I am one of the extremely few left who know something about it. I was given the task, with only one and a half weeks to go, and I felt I could not refuse. I've been helping out the Italians, the French, the Liths and who not, so I may as well come to the rescue of the Jews too. It so happened that Chicago at that time there appeared the "Borschtapade" production a Jewish-humor vaudeville and in that group there were also dancers, a mother and her three children, who did some stylized Hassidic dancing. They were contacted. Mrs. Tana Tovar, her daughters Lolita and Chanita, and her son Conrad, all from Los Angeles, were good material to work with and in several afternoons the routine was set and the results were most gratifying. Our number alone was THE thing that brought the house down and my reputation as an exponent of the Hassidic dance was established (I hope). So it was all worth the trouble, the spending of time (which I didn't have), and the cancelling of various appointments.

Christmastide itself was a happy period in many respects. Kučios (Christmas eve celebration) was spent at my aunt and uncle's home, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Urbutis. Among the Lithuanians, Christmas, eve is the holiday when much ado is expended. My aunt is a wonderful cook, and though no meat foods are permitted, the various herring and fish preparations, plus the other traditional standbys of Sliziukai and Kisielius, overlapped the prescribed 12 course meal, and because everything was extremely delicious we ate beyond our capacity. Present were Kazy, Lil and their little girl, Nancy; Grandma Severa Cinskas; Ernest Estelle, and their three kids; aunt Julia Rozgus; Mr. and Mrs. Leo Oksas; Bernice and Algis Urbutis (these last two named are recent arrivals from DP camps); and Mr. and Mrs. John Butkus and their children. That made quite a large family circle.

I left that same night with Ernest and Estelle and family for Dyer, Indiana, where the following day some of us met at their home for another "out of the world" feast of turkey and what not. Estelle surprised me with her culinary accomplishments. We went to hear Mass at the Dyer church, and there too I was pleasantly surprised by the singing of beautiful voices which were well trained. Didn't expect it in that tiny town; it was high class. That night I still had a program at KAM (Jewish) temple.

The following day another feast day at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Boand, a charming Southern couple who really know their recipes. They had for guests two Siamese and three Burmese students, and the afternoon proved to be a most enjoyable one-interesting Burmese-Siamese folk songs and brilliant conversation.

Mr. and Mrs. John Adams, Mobilians now working in Chicago, were going to Mobile for the New Years. Eddie Kaupas and I joined them and we left Chicago the 29th of December — a snow-melting, messy and beclouded day. The following morning we were in sunny and warm Alabama. After a half day in Mobile, showing Eddie the various historic spots of interest, we went to Fairhope; the friendliest, loveliest and grandest little town in the U. S. (as far as I am concerned). It was a period of happy moments in a cascading succession.

I've been away from Fairhope five years now, the my last visit was four years ago when I attended Marietta Stuersel's wedding to Dr. Sergio Fernandez. This time my excuse was to attend the wedding of the last of the Stuersel girls, Helen, to Arthur Lazzari. The groom belongs to the landed gentry of the Italian pioneers of Daphne and Bell Forest, inhabited by such strictly Italian names of respectable families as the: Phillipi, Bertolla, Bertagnolli, Boni, Corte, Mancini, etc. The wedding took place on January 2nd in the neat and trim Catholic church of Christ The King, in Daphne, during a morning nuptial Mass. A reception followed at the home of the Stuersels, who are also Fairhope pioneers of German origin.

At the wedding I got a chance to hear the beautiful voices of my former "children", Elsie Arnold and Patsie Porter, who sang most enchantingly the Ave Maria, Pater Noster and a hymn.

The bride's family suffered a slight set-back due to serious accident to the bride's brother Herman, while at work. He suffered a split cranium, temporary blindness, unconsciousness and paralysis, barely two weeks before Helen's wedding. But on Christmas day Herman was declared out of danger. Nevertheless, this accident dampened the spirits of the parents and the sisters.